

The Terms Postmodernism, Postcoloniality and Postfeminism in the American Literature

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Abstract: The terms postmodernism, postcoloniality and postfeminism in the American literature, insistently pointing to the realm beyond, only embody the restless and constantly redefining energy of modernity, transforming the present into an expanding and eccentric field of experience and power. Being on the other side is being in between. But being on the other side also belongs to the time of rethinking, returning to the present in order to describe anew cultural modernity, to affirm the human and historical community, in order to touch the future of the literature.

Keywords: postmodernism, postcoloniality, postfeminism, American literature, deterritorialization, multiculturalism.

Introduction

The terms with the prefix "post" are not used here in the sense of "anti" or "after", as they are often interpreted. It is not accidental, for example, to play with the metaphor post (eng. " POST ") - as a kind of lighthouse, post, a new reporting point, claiming, say, in the case of postmodernity and postcoloniality, to complete, cancel or radically rethink the project of modernity and, accordingly, colonial discourse. This idea is expressed, in particular, in the book by A. Adam and X. Tiffin, *Beyond the Last Frontier: The Theory of Postcolonialism and Postmodernity* (1991)¹². I will quote the words of Homi Bhabhi, who proposed, in my opinion, a successful interpretation of the phenomena marked with the prefix post- in his interpretation of modern culture, which is expanded in a diachronic rather than in a synchronous aspect. "If the jargon of our time — postmodernism, postcoloniality, postfeminism — has any meaning, it does not consist in the conventional meaning of the prefix post-, as an expression of succession ("after" feminism) or opposite ("anti" modernism). These terms, insistently pointing to the realm beyond, only embody the restless and constantly redefining energy of modernity, transforming the present into an expanding and eccentric field of experience and power. Being on the other side is being in between. But being on the other side also belongs to the time of rethinking, returning to the present in order to describe anew cultural modernity, to affirm the human and historical community, in order to touch the future from its here and now side".

Finally, important for almost all of the listed areas of research is the concept of "cultural frontier", which can be defined both in the temporal and spatial senses, as a changeable interaction of the traditional and modern principles of intraculture. Today, it is often deprived of geographical specificity and is transferred either by analogy to other socio-cultural and even aesthetic models (the relationship between the frontier and "marginality"), or entirely inside the consciousness of the "frontier man", existing on the verge of cultural transgression, between cultures, times, among languages, in a state of constant border crossing, where group cultural identification is constantly opposed to personal. "Borderland", like all of the above concepts, is a rather vulnerable and amorphous term. It can be said that in the Pan-American cultural space the problem of active conceptualization of the "border" has grown out of rather private, at first glance, phenomena associated with the comprehension of the Mexican-American cultural experience and, more broadly, the experience of interaction between Latin American culture and

ultra-progressive Western civilization represented by the United States. In the American context, the "borderland" has already become the center of a separate interdisciplinary field of research (border studies), where literary criticism plays an important role. Frontier studies, with their transnational and transcultural pathos, are created mainly on the other side of the Atlantic and in the so-called "third" world. Borderland theorists, many of whom are themselves borderline personalities, are equally free to orient them both in Western discourse and in what, to one degree or another, was and is "native" to them in the cultural sense. Frontier theories are therefore both inside and outside of Western discourse. This concerns, for example, the ability to critically evaluate not only the dominant culture, but also oneself, to self-reflection according to the Western model, and on the other hand, the desire to reflect and judge from the point of view of the "frontier" culture, which should ideally give the privilege of critical distance. I would like to mention such frontier theorists in the USA as Renato Rosaldo, author of *Culture and Truth* (1989). D. Saldivar, who wrote, in particular, the monograph "Problems of the Borderland. How to Redraw the Map of American Cultural Studies" (1997). Of particular importance is the collection edited by Scott Michaelsen and David Johnson "Border Theory" (1997)¹⁵, where the subject of research in the context of border theories is not only Mexican-American proper or, more broadly, ethno-racial elements, but also gender and regional borderlands. and some other forms of marginality.

Main part

An important property of the cultural frontier is ambivalence, which is most clearly manifested in the characterization of the "frontier consciousness" escaping the definition, a person stuck on the border, and often opposing not only placelessness, but also a new rooting in one, two or more cultures. Intermediateness is associated in modern Western studies of the borderland with the concepts of "deterritorialization" proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari¹⁶, and the borderland, as a symbolic and spatial image, is often comprehended through the concept of cultural "deployment", i.e. deprivation of cultural territory, a place "in the gap" - between national rootedness (with a stable ontology) and a new placelessness, marked by the memory of deprivation of roots, which increasingly marks the social and psychological "anxiety" that underlies the national, cultural, ethno-racial identification.

Let's take a quick look at the finalists of national American literary competitions and award winners in the field of fiction over the past two decades. Let's make a reservation right away that we do not in any way want to say that the Pulitzer Prize or the Pen-Faulkner Prize for Literature really goes to the best writers and books, being, of course, to a large extent political and ideological actions, like all modern culture. The names familiar to the ear and eye of the orthodox critic, who still rants about universal values (however, there are not so many of them left today), in recent decades have been pretty diluted with rather unexpected artistic phenomena. Thus, among the recent Pulitzer laureates, along with Philip Roth, well-known to both American and Russian readers, who received another prize in 1998 for the novel "American Pastoral", there will be a lesser-known representative of the Jewish-American tradition - Tony Kushner, who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the sensational play "Angels in America" (1991), which develops the topic of ethno-gender and national identities in the context of a polemic with the well-known "melting pot" theory. The name of the American-Cuban prose writer Oscar Ihuelos, who wrote the novel "The Mambo Kings Sing a Love Song" (1989), which recreates the specific experience and features of the acculturation of Cuban immigrants who stirred up New York music clubs in the middle of the 20th century, will be next to the name in the list of Pulitzer laureates "former southerner" Richard Ford, who published the novel "Independence Day" in 1995 - a bitter, extremely sober, somewhat cynical and at the same time nostalgic meditation on the topic of the real America, where the usual moral and philosophical guidelines were lost and debunked. Among the finalists of other influential national literary awards - the National Literary Award, the National Award of Criticism, the New York Criticism Award, etc. - in recent years there have also been writers whose names and biographies, until recently, would not have given grounds to classify them unconditionally as "American" authors. We are talking about such prose

writers as the Indo-American writer Bharati Muheri, the Dominican Julia Alvarez, the Mexican Ron Arias, the German-born author Ursula Hegy, who wrote a book largely following the style and grotesque poetics of Günter Grass "Stones from the River" (1994) and others⁴. Finally, for quite a long time in the United States there has been a unique phenomenon - writers, who cannot be unambiguously classified according to their national (and even linguistic) characteristics: here is a textbook and somewhat earlier example of the Nobel laureate I.B. Singer, who immigrated to the United States from Poland and even wrote his own works based on the American experience, in Yiddish, or such a polylingual, multicultural author, not amenable to unambiguous classifications, as V. Nabokov, in recent years can be supplemented by names less ambitious, but quite numerous and very characteristic of the postmodern (including, and above all, postcolonial) literary situation. To name just three - Michelle Cliff, who was born in Jamaica, spent a long time in Europe, and now lives in California (the writer claims that she has no nationality at all, only her own imagination), the Austro-Jewish-American author Walter Ebisch, who published in 1980, the book *How German Is It*, rethinking the "imaginary" German cultural experience, by Mexican-American novelist Rolando Hinojosa, who created a cycle of Spanish-English hybrid novels about the frontier in South Texas.

Conclusion

For an inert consciousness, accustomed to certain, fairly well-established principles of perception, evaluation and conditional, but, nevertheless, very tenacious and practically lost in everyday life, the correction of the relativity of the division of cultural, in this case, literary phenomena, creating a kind of hierarchy of authors considered American, these unexpected catches that the cultural reality of recent years, as if in spite of, throws up, increasingly blurring the already shaky concept of "mainstream" and "cultural backyards", introducing a sense of amorphousness, blurring of cultural boundaries and binary oppositions, often turn out to be completely uninterpretable. And, of course, it prefers not to notice them, or to take them out of the framework of the cultural model in terms of which it operates. It is quite easy to do this with literary phenomena, declaring them unworthy of attention from an artistic point of view, that is, assessing them again within the framework of the existing coordinate system, not always and not in everything designed for that new that may appear in the bowels of the "becoming", unfinished culture, systems of perception, interpretation, critical and artistic understanding of phenomena. Absolutely "invisible" literary sub-traditions that have existed for many decades, and in some cases for several centuries, are increasingly coming to the fore (albeit not always sufficiently developed compared to that, again, a conditional single center, which was considered national culture). Many of them today are desperately striving for "appearance", reconstructing their development path, often with excesses and the desire to "create" the tradition retroactively.

According to the same paradoxical logic, part of these "invisible" traditions gradually entered the corpus of national literature, albeit sometimes in a form of "exoticism" or "orientalism" destructive for their own identity, invisibles, but at the same time remaining "alien". In small doses, such an infusion did not seem (and was not) threatening to that conditional "unity" that the national literary tradition should have represented, according to the ideas of its adherents. Therefore, by the middle of the 20th century, it became customary to talk about the African-American or Indian components in the culture of the United States, later - about various local ethnic "revivals" (in particular, about the Jewish renaissance), about the female "contribution" or about the "voice" of representatives of sexual minorities⁶, and finally, about various countercultural manifestations - from beatniks and hippie literature to generation X. In general, however, this principle of adding exotic components was not able (or intended) to change the established image of American literature.

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